

(2)

THE
FLITCH OF BACON;
A COMIC OPERA,
IN TWO ACTS:

As it is performed at the
THEATRE-ROYAL
IN THE
HAY-MARKET.

By the Rev. HEN. BATE, afterwards

K. D. Bay (S. H. B.)

Thus these two
Imparadis'd in one another's arms,
(The happier *Eden*) shall enjoy their fill
Of blifs, on blifs!

MILTON.

DUBLIN:
PRINTED FOR THE COMPANY OF BOOKSELLERS.
M,DCC,LXXIX.



DEDICATION.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD, AND LADY ALGERNON
PERCY.

MY LORD, AND LADY,

YOUR title to the *matrimonial prize* of DUNMOW PRIORY, is admitted by the general voice, without the formality of the claim; and therefore I have presumed to lay it at your feet. Humble as the offering is, it carries with it the never-fading wreath of CONJUGAL VIRTUE, which in our own isle gives lustre to a *Diadem*—and therefore cannot be unacceptable to any branch of the illustrious house of NORTHUMBERLAND.

I am,

My LORD and LADY,

with the greatest respect,

your most obedient,

and devoted servant,

HENRY BATE.

Buckingham-Street,
June 1, 1779.

A 2

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Major Benbow	—	Mr. Parsons.
Justice Benbow	—	Mr. Blisset.
Captain Greville	—	Mr. Brett.
Captain Wilson	—	Mr. Bannister.
Tipple	—	Mr. Edwin.
Kilderkin	—	Mr. Massey.
Ned	—	Mr. Stevens.
Eliza, (married to Greville)		Miss Harpur.

Shepherds, Shepherdesses, &c.

SCENE, DUNMOW PRIORY, ESSEX.



THE
FLITCH OF BACON.

ACT I.

SCENE a Green.

The Curtain rising, discovers Tipple on a Ladder, hanging a FLITCH OF BACON upon the Arm of an old Oak; Putty, the Glazier, painting the Names of the Candidates on the Stocks.

CHORUS OF VILLAGERS.

RISING with the sun to labor,
Blithe like him we spend the day!
When he sets, the merry tabor
Bids us frolic, sport and play!

Tip. There it is! And as fine a flitch as any
in this hundred or the next; now let 'em win
it, and snack it, say I.

A 3

Put.

2 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Put. Why they say as how, Master Tipple, that they been your tip-top gentry that are coming down to swear for it.

Tip. Ay, like enough, neighbour Putty, for now-a-days *they* may swear through a church door, and nobody must not say nay to 'em.

Put. We hears there's to be rare doings, howsever!

Tip. Plenty of the big beer stirring to-day; why his worship has given me orders, that no throat shall be dry thro' the whole hamlet!

All. Rare news, indeed!

Tip. So bundle along, my lads and lasses—clap your best foot foremost! Get your half-day's-work done, and ere night you shall be all as merry as grigs.

Exeunt, singing the Chorus.

SCENE *a Room in the Justice's House.*

Enter Justice.

Just. No tidings yet of the arrival of the candidates?

Serv. None at all, Sir.

Just. Surely I have not mistaken the day! Let me see—*[Takes a Letter from his Pocket and reads.]* “A young couple, named Lionel and “and Elizabeth Greville, intend to claim the “honourable reward due to their conjugal fidelity, on Thursday next, the 28th of July.”—And glad I am, in this age of divorces, separations, and devil's doings, that there is any conjugal

A COMIC OPERA. 3

jugal fidelity at all to be found.—[*Reads on.*]
 “Being able to conform to all the ceremonies
 “in that case made and provided, according to
 “the charter of Dunmow Priory.”—No, it’s
 right enough, I see. [*After a Pause.*—This,
 which will prove a day of festivity to the whole
 country, is to me a sad memento of my daugh-
 ter’s disobedience, and my own rashness. Per-
 haps, even now, when by the custom of my
 manor, I am about to reward the love and
 constancy of this happy pair, my own poor girl
 may be the wife of an unfeeling tyrant, and the
 child of penury, on a foreign shore! Why did
 I, in the bitterness of my wrath, refuse to see
 her?—But then was there not a provocation?—
 To elope to France! and that with a young
 rake of an officer whom I never beheld!—

Enter Tipple.

Tip. Your servant, your worship!

Just. Well, Tipple, what news have you brought?

Tip. Only, that all’s done as your worship ordered—Fohh! fohh! how woundly hot it is this morning! My mouth is so parch’d and my throat so dry!—

Just. [*Smiling.*] The old hint for a morn-
 ing draught! Eh, Tipple?—Here, William,
 bring a tankard of strong beer.

Tip. Ah! your worship’s a sensible kind of a
 body: you can see the wants of a poor man
 with half an eye, and loves to relieve ’em—but

THE FLITCH OF BACON.

as for your neighbour, Dr. Stingy, our Wicar, I never see the man that could tell, whether he brew'd with pale malt or brown; and that's a monstrous shame for a clargyman!

Enter Servant, with a Tankard.

Just. Come, take your liquor, Tipple, and you'll proceed the better.

Tip. [*After Drinking.*] The rich don't want it: but it does mend a poor man's spirits sure enough.—Well then, your worship, the Flitch is hung up on the arm of the old oak, and a choice one it is! 'twas one of the last litter of the old carryow sow; it weighs twenty stone at least, and better stuff never did man stick knife into.—Oh! and Nat Putty, the glazier, too, has finished painting the names of the candidates upon the stocks, according to the canon law of the manor.

Just. That's all very well. You must now go and find out my brother, the Major, and tell him, I shall be glad of his company to dinner, notwithstanding our little pet this morning.

Tip. I will, your worship: but I am glad his honour, the Major, is not to be *jocum tenus* for your worship, he's so much upon the roguish order with the women, now and ten. I did not care to mention it to your worship before; but as true as I'm alive he was a little rom-bustical to our Bridget, no longer ago than last Sunday was se'night, as she was coming home from church.

Just. Ay, no doubt, for his head runs of nothing

thing else but fighting and wenching from morning to night ; though he'll meet with his match one day or other, take my word for it. But it's a little strange, methinks, Tipple, that in the course of so many centuries, no couple of our own family should have claimed this matrimonial honour.

Tip. Mayhap, your worship, they thought their own bacon too fat for 'em, and would not sit easy on their stomachs.

Just. So it should seem, Tipple ; [*Smiling.*]—well, do you hear any thing of the happy couple, who, or what they are ?

Tip. No, your worship.—My wife Bridget thinks as how they been Londoners ; now, for my part, I takes it to be a Lord and his spouse ; such a mort of folk have been flocking from all parts to see 'em, and such a woundly sight of of chaiseses, and fine cattle, been come to the Red Cow and Green Man already—Oh ! I'am certain-it must be a lord.

Just. Oh, that can't be !

Tip. Why not, your worship ?

Just. Because, these are not the days, Tipple, for coronets and conjugal affection to take a trip together to *Dunmow Priory* ; besides, the lady has desired the privilege of being veiled, a modest sign, seldom or never to be found among the great folks, Tipple, depend on't.

Tip. Modest ! not they, ehecks ! they'd sooner stare poor folk out of countenance, than give 'em any thing.

Just. Well said, Tipple ! A pretty correct portrait of our modern peerage !

Tip.

6 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Tip. To tell your worship the truth, I'm not over and above fond of 'em.

SONG, awkwardly imitating the Maccaronies.

T I P P L E.

Oh, a gay flashy lord is a woundy fine sight!
Who is ne'er to be seen but with owls in the night:
Then so flight here behind,
He's blown thro' by the wind;
So cropp'd,
And belopp'd!

Such timber, so limber, from top to the toe,
That he wriggles and nods, as he walks to and fro!

I ne'er seed but one in the course of my life,
And him I had lick'd, but for Bridget my wife;
I laugh'd at his pride.
And the spit by his side,
Good lack!
His long back,

Like a building so weak is, it hardly can stand,
But would snap short in two like a twig in this hand!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE

A COMIC OPERA.

7

SCENE *a Grove. Drum beats.*

Greville, Wilton and Eliza discovered, in disguise
as a recruiting Party.

GLEE.* TRIO.

How merrily we live that soldiers be !
Round the world thus we march with merry glee :
On the pleasant downs sometimes encamp'd we lie ;
No cares we know, but Fortune's frowns defy,
So long as we can see our colours fly. }

Grev. Under this disguise, we are arrived
within gun-shot of the fort ; the fort, which,
about this time twelve-month, I sack'd of thee,
Eliza, its dearest treasure.

Eliza. From which, you mean, I voluntarily
deserted to the enemy.—Heigho !

Grev. Come, come, you promis'd, when we
embarked from Calais on this enterprize, to
give all these womanish fears to the wind.

Wil. You who made so light of the stormy
terrors of the sea, to sink now at the prospect of
success !

Eliza. Alas ! you, neither of you, know the
difference between that, and the present con-
flict !

A I R.

* These lines being a kind of parody on those of
the old Glee, the same irregularity of measure was
oblig'd to be preserved.

THE FLITCH OF BACON.

A I R. E L I Z A.

The pow'rs that agitate the seas,
 And bid the billows roar,
 Can calm them into bounds of peace,
 And make them kiss the shore:

But I, who rais'd, and left the storm,
 To wreck a parent's breast,
 Can ne'er approach his dreaded form,
 To bless him, or be blest!

Grev. Prithee, love, take courage, let this
 inspire thee. [Kissing her.]

Wil. As the cordial seems to revive her,
 don't be sparing of them, but give her another,
 and we shall be proof against any thing.

Eliza. The deuce take you! You all know
 well enough how to enslave us; while a poor
 woman's conquest generally ceases with the
 novelty of her charms.

Grev. Never, with the man of common sense
 or integrity, my Eliza, depend on't.

A I R. G R E V I L L E.

No:—'twas neither shape nor feature,
 Made me own thy sov'reign sway;
 Ev'n thine, the proudest gifts of nature,
 Could have triumph'd but a day!

Beauty's graces, tho' inviting,
 Scarce the ravish'd sense will bind;
 But with Virtue's charms uniting,
 Steal Love's fetters o'er the mind.

Wil.

A COMIC OPERA.

9

Wil. Oh! the drum, I see, has brought Ned to us.

Enter Ned.

Grev. Well, Ned, how does the land lie?

Ned. Rarely, Sir; every thing goes as your heart cou'd wish.

Eliza. And how does my dear father, Ned?

Ned. Oh! pure and hearty, Madam.

Eliza. Thank Heaven!

Grev. Did the old gentleman hesitate at all, to comply with the demand in my letter?

Ned. Not in the least, Sir; for when he read it, he only sigh'd, and said, Heaven forbid he should with-hold the reward due to honourable love.

Eliza. Heaven then reward his generous feelings! How I long, my Greville, once more to behold this best of fathers and of men!

Grev. So neither he, nor his brother, the old Major, have the least suspicion of our scheme, you are sure, Ned.

Ned. None in the world, Sir. His worship wanted much to know who the couple were; but he seemed satisfied at last, when I told him, they desired it might be kept a secret; and has consented, that you, Madam, should appear veil'd before him, not to put your modesty to the blush.

Grev. Run then to the corner of the lane there, where the post-coach stands, take out the cloak-bag, pay the drivers, and return to us immediately.

[*Exit Ned.*

B

Eliza.

Eliza. I begin now to be more afraid of my uncle's obstinacy than any thing else; for his consent, you know, is as necessary as my father's, for the recovery of my fortune.

Wil. If that's all your fear, make yourself perfectly easy; for a little plot has just struck me, that cannot fail, I think, to operate effectually upon him, if I understand his character at all, in which you must not only assist, without a murmur, but act a principal part. [*To Eliza.*

Eliza. You may be sure, my assistance will not be wanting: but what is it? I'm all impatience till I know it.

Wil. Why, what think you of my bringing you together, for you to make a conquest of the old one-eyed dotard, (who, you say, can't see the length of his nose) and then leave it to your wit and good sense to turn it to a proper advantage?

Eliza. I cannot divine what end this can possibly answer.

Wil. Oh! the best in the world; that of betraying him into so ridiculous a situation, that he shall readily assent to any terms you may propose, to save himself from becoming the derision of the whole country.

Eliza. Why, I must confess, I do not see any great difficulty in effecting this—for the Major is a hungry fish, that rises at every fly, and if I can muster up spirits enough, I don't fear but I should be able to hook him.

Grev. Bravo! I like the plot amazingly!

Eliza. But if he should begin to be violent, and talk nonsense to me?

Wil.

A COMIC OPERA. II

Wil. Why then you've only to shut your ears and run away from him : but be sure you contrive it so, that he may catch you again.

Enter Ned, with a Cloak-bag, &c.

Where is the likeliest place to fall in with the Major accidentally in his morning's ramble, Ned ?

Ned. Oh, Sir ! you may meet with him this very instant, at the Red Cow upon the Green, taking what he calls his morning's bever.

Wil. If that's the case, I'll make the attack immediately ; and as you have agreed to try the experiment, Greville must attend you to this spot about two hours hence, and then leave the rest to fortune and me.

Eliza. I'll certainly attempt it, tho', even with all the assistance of your friendship and invention, rather doubtful of success.

Wil. You know but little of these old dotards, or you would be satisfied how easy a matter it is to carry our plan into execution.

A I R. W I L S O N.

Tell me which of magic charms

Ev'ry earthly pow'r disarms ;

Young ones pleasing,

Grey-beards teasing,

Setting fancy wild afloat ?—

'Tis the snow-white Petticoat !

THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Circled thus from prying eyes,
 Love's immortal witchcraft lies :
 And to bless us,
 Or distress us,
 Nature bids us fondly doat—
 On the snow-white *Petticoat* !

[*Exeunt.*]SCENE, *a Room at the Red Cow.*

Enter Major Benbow, and Tipple with a Tankard.

Tip. I'll be sworn, your honor, there will be a thousand folk at least, gentle, and simple, and all.

Maj. And what's that, you fool, to an army on the field of battle ? where I've seen fifty thousand alive and merry before breakfast, and half of 'em dead on the spot before dinner, and a damn'd fine fight, let me tell you, Tipple !

Tip. Mercy on us !

Maj. Many's the good time that I've seen the field covered with Frenchmen's blood, and made so hot by our hissing nine-pounders—that one might have poach'd an egg in it !

Tip. [*Whistling.*] Now he's off full gallop !

[*Aside.*]

Maj. Did I never tell you, Tipple, of my behaviour at the battle of Crevelt, where I lost the fellow to this eye ?

Tip. O la ! Yes, your honour, a thousand times.

Maj.

A COMIC OPERA. 13

Maj. That's a damn'd confounded lie, Tipple! Besides, if I had, it would imprint it the stronger on your memory. On the 17th of August, just at break of day—[*Drum beats.*]—what the devil's all this about?

Tip. O, lud! the French *evafion*'s certainly come.

Maj. There's nothing new in that, Tipple, for the French always evade coming to blows as long as ever they can; for my part, I wish the Monsieus would come over; I should like to see a few of their whiskers on this side the water.

Tip. Lud, your honour! how can you be so blasphemous? Why should you?

Maj. To train our Cox-heath camp a little? then our militia would eat their brown bread without grumbling, and fight like lions, for fear the hungry Frenchmen should eat it all up from 'em—Here, Kilderkin!

Enter Kilderkin.

What, the devil! are we besieg'd here, Kilderkin?

Kil. Sieg'd, your honour!

Maj. Ay.—What drum was that?

Kil. O, la! your honour; only a drummer of a marching regiment of foot, just call'd in for a mug of beer, that's all.

Tip. I fecks! I'm glad on't!

Maj. Order him in to me, Kilderkin, that I may examine his beating orders.

Kil.

14 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Kil. I will, your honour: but he seems a pickled kind of a fellow.

Maj. Pickled!—I'll pickle him, a dog, I warrant you—and fee for a constable, Kilderkin; do you hear. *[Exit Kilderkin.]*

Tip. Ax him, your honour, by what authority he comes into our Willage, to frighten poor honest men, and their Vives and children?

Maj. Let me alone, Tipple, let me alone.

Enter Wilson.

How dare you, Sir, beat a drum in this division without my leave?

Wil. Your leave, Sir!—Why I don't know who you are!

Maj. Not know who I am!—Did you ever see such an impudent scoundrel in the whole course of your life?

Tip. A pure impudent fellow, sure enough.

Maj. Lookee, you thumper of parchment! I am Major Benbow, who served five and thirty years in the train, but am now retired on half-pay, with as many honourable holes through my body, as you have button holes in your jacket, you dog; and one of his Majesty's justices of peace for the county of Essex.

Wil. *[Taking off his Hat.]* If so, I crave your honour's pardon.

Maj. Shew me your beating order, Sir;—shew me your beating order.

Wil. An't please your honour, the serjeant is gone to the justice's, next the church, to get it back'd.

Maj.

A COMIC OPERA. 15

Maj. There's another damn'd insult to the military ! Get my brother to back a beating order, while I am canton'd in the parish !—A feeder of bullocks, who never smelt powder in the course of his life ! Nor you neither, one would suppose, by your unsoldier-like conduct.

Wil. It does not become a private man to boast of his exploits, or I could convince your honour, that I have seen some warm service, and that when I was no higher than your honour's cane.

Maj. Ay, what ?—When ?—Where ?

Wil. I'll tell your honour :

A I R. W I L S O N.

From *Minden's* plains of glory,

I date my warlike story ;

Where conquest, never yet out-done

By British arms, was nobly won !

See old *Kingstie's* lads present !

Revenge desiring !

Incessant firing !

On fame and Britain's glory bent.

All our powder and ball expended,

The *Monseurs* thought the battle ended,

Till with bayonets advancing,

We quickly set their columns prancing,

And, to make our vict'ry good,

Follow'd thro' a crimson flood !

[*Da Capo.*

Tip. A marv'lous bloody story, sure enough !

Maj. Why that does smack a little of the old soldier, I must confess. What regiment do you belong to ?

Wil. I belong to the old Twentieth, your honour.

Maj.

16 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Maj. And how many does your party consist of?

Wil. Why there's only the serjeant, corporal, and myself.

Maj. What only three of you?

Wil. No more, your honour; except a young lady, indeed, that came off with the serjeant, in a kind of a frolic.

Maj. Eh! What? A young lady!—You may leave us for half a minute, Tipple, while I examine him a little closer, as the times are perilous, to see if he is not a spy.—Do you take me?—I'll ring for you when I want you.

Tip. Ecod, that's right, your worship, sound him to the bottom; for he looks woundly like a spy, or a Roman Papish. [*Making signals to each other.*]

[*Exit Tipple.*]

Maj. What was it you was saying about a fine girl just now? You may speak out, my honest lad, for nobody now can over-hear us.

Wil. [*Pondering.*] Fine girl!—O! yes, your honour, I believe I did say something about the frolicksome young lady, who, tying her sheets together, let herself out of a boarding-school window, near London, to come off with our serjeant: but I believe they are plaguy sick of each other by this time.

Maj. Sweet, spirited little baggage—what would I give to have been in the dog's place! Is she very pretty?

Wil. Oh! the sweetest rosy young creature your honour every clapped your—one eye on!

Maj. Hold your tongue, you dog, or you'll set me all on fire; I'm in a fever already!—

Hearkee!

Hearkee! Do you think she is—come—at—able?

Wil. That I can't say; but if your honour was to be as secret as I could wish, I don't know but matters might be brought about.

Maj. Who me! I'll be as silent as a wounded Frenchman, with a lock'd jaw.—Come, tell me, where shall I see her; for, you damn'd dog, you've beat Love's revelly on the drum of my ear, till my passions are all under arms! Come, come, it's your duty to assist a brother soldier; besides, [*Giving him Money.*] there's your Master's order for it, stamp'd with his own royal arms.

Wil. That being the case, your honour, it would be mutiny not to obey, and punishable by the articles of war. [*Putting the Money in his Pocket.*] But would your honour treat her kindly? for she is very young and tender, and of a very good family.

Maj. Pretty soul! Why if I like her, I'll take her under my protection, and nurse her like a pet lamb! But what the devil shall we do with the serjeant the while?

Wil. Oh! leave that to me; I'll take care of him: a batch of Coggeshall beer will put him under an arrest at any time.

Maj. Excellent! why what a shrew'd clever dog you are!—But when shall I see the little hussy?

Wil. This very afternoon; before the ceremony on the Green, I'll contrive that she shall take a walk in the grove, just upon the hill. I'll tell her what kindness she is to expect; after which, I shall have nothing to do, but march you up to her, and leave you to settle the rest.

Maj.

18 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

Maj. Give me your hand—You're a damn'd fine, jolly fellow!—Say no more; Snug's the word.

Enter Tipple.

Tip. Here's the constable in the kitchen, your honour, ready to commit the wagran, spy.

Maj. Spy! What spy? Is the fellow mad or drunk this morning? Why, you fool, this is one of the finest fellows in all his Majesty's service! So shake hands with him, Tipple.

Wil. Come, Master Tipple, [*Offering his Hand.*] don't be afraid.

Tip. I'm content. [*Looking affrighted.*]

Maj. That's well. And now we'll fall y forth, and see how the world wags abroad.

[*Making Signs to Wilson.*]

T R I O.

All. How should we mortals spend our hours?

Wil. ——— In war!

Maj. ——— In love!

Tip. ——— In drinking!

All. None but a fool consumes his pow'rs—

Wil. ——— In peace,

Maj. ——— In care,

Tip. ——— In thinking.

All. *Time*, would you let him wisely pass,

Will. ——— Is lively!

Maj. ——— Brisk!

Tip. ——— And jolly!

All. Dip but his wings i'th sparkling glass,
And he'll drown dull melancholy!

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

S C E N E a Grove.

Enter Eliza, and Greville.

D U E T.

Both. **T**HO' fortune cloud hope's friendly ray,
 That beams our guardian light,
 Our constancy shall cheer the day,
 Our love the longest night!

Grev. By thee belov'd!

Eliza. ————— While blest with thee!

Both Stern Fate may frown in vain;
 Content, and sweet Simplicity,
 Will take us in their train!

Grev. Tho', my Eliza, we did fly from parental tyranny, and obeyed the call of Nature, in following our own inclinations, yet the reflection, that we have violated no principle, either of reason or virtue, will ever preserve our domestic felicity!

Eliza. Hence all doubt and fears!—The arguments of love and Greville are irresistible!

Grev. To your post then! for I see your uncle and Wilson ascending the hill; I must withdraw,

draw, therefore, on the other side of the grove : but whatever may be the issue of this experiment, I shall wait to conduct you to the church, where by oath, you know, we must qualify ourselves for the last, and most serious scene of all.

Eliza. To encounter the eyes of an offended father, will be a trying scene indeed !

Grev. Courage, my love, and success cannot fail to attend us ! [*Kisses her, and retires.*]

Eliza. Adieu !—Well, matters are now coming to a crisis indeed !—It's well for me, the old Major is purblind, or I fear my confusion on his first approach would betray me.—Bless me ! here he comes hobbling along ;—suppose I lure him with my favourite air, and thus decoy the old bird of prey, by the very strains in which I love to recount my Greville's affection.

A I R. ELIZA.

Within this breast the record lies

Of all the vows he made ;

His lips—but more his tell-tale eyes,

His inmost soul betray'd !

How could I shun the pleasing pain

When all my doubts were flown ?

Besides, my blushes told the swain,

My heart was not my own !

The

The Major and Wilton enter just before the conclusion of the Air.

Wil. A sweet little pipe, a'n't she, your honour?

Maj. Enchanting?—But where is the dear delightful little minx? She's got of the blind side of me already.

Wil. There she sits, your honour, on that stile, leaning her rosy cheek upon her lilly hand.

Maj. By my sword and authority, and so she does! [*Looking thro' a Glass.*] and looks as soft, and as plump as—Zounds! I'm so impatient, I can't think of a simile for her!

[*Putting himself in an attitude of advancing.*]

Wil. Hush, your honour! Now pray be a little gentle with her at first, and you'll find she'll come to hand like a tame sparrow.

Maj. Mum!—You're right.—I'll take your advice, for I'm apt to be a little too fiery I must confess.

Eliza. He's a long time before he advances; like cowards of the other sex, I begin to derive courage, I find, from the backwardness of the enemy. [*Aside.*]

Maj. [*Peeping thro' a Glass.*] Has she fine eyes, Drum?

Wil. Beautiful, your honour!

Maj. But, Drum! She has got *two*, I hope?

Wil. Yes, your honour.

Maj. I'm glad on't, for I love to bask in the sun-shine of a pair of pretty twinklers!—But
C harkee!—

harkee!—Are you sure now, that the Serjeant's safe after all?

Wil. So safe, your honour, that I left him, about ten minutes ago, at the Green Man, not able to stand or go.

Maj. Why then you may incline to the left, and beat a retreat down the hill, as soon as you please; but you're sure that you settled it with her about my coming?

Wil. That you may depend on, your honour;—And such a settlement as will cool your courage, or I'm much mistaken, my old buck.

[*Aside, and Exit.*]

Maj. Now for the attack.—[*Advancing.*]—But second thoughts are best; so, like a prudent officer, I'll first reconnoitre at a distance, for fear she should spring a mine upon me.

A I R. M A J O R.

Odds bobs! she's wond'rous pretty!

Her locks are almost jetty!

She's a finer wench than Betty!

And see her eyes are blue!

Her snow-white bosom's heaving

My appetite is craving!—

She hits my taste to a shaving!—

Sweet damsel, how do you do?

[*Advancing.*]

Maj. I say, how d'ye do, damsel? How d'ye do?

Eliza.

A COMIC OPERA. 23

Eliza. Pretty well, I thank you, Sir; how do you do?

Maj. Oh! oh! the fort surrenders without firing a single shot!

Eliza. May I be so bold as to ask your name, Sir? For you're a fine man, and a brave one I'm sure, by your looks.

Maj. Poor thing! She's done for already! [*Conceitedly.*] The gates are thrown open! so that I have nothing to do, but march in with all the honours of war. [*Aside.*

Eliza. La! as sure as I'm alive, you are the agreeable gentleman that the drummer told me about; a'n't you, Sir?

Maj. The very same, my little dove! no less a man than Major Benbow, of the train, who formerly laid whole towns in ashes, and left such beauteous damsels as you to weep the embers out.

Eliza. Indeed! Dear me, what a brave man you must be?

Maj. O! that's nothing, child, to what I've been us'd to—but now, my better fate ordains, that I should sit down before the breast-work of your little heart, and never raise the siege, as long as I have a tongue to summon it to surrender.

Eliza. Ah, me! what an unfortunate girl am I, who cannot shut my ears against the flattering tales of a gallant and agreeable man.—But if you love me then, as you say you do, take me with you to see shew upon the Green.

Maj. What my brother's damn'd *Flitch of Bacon* raree shew? No; that's rather too bad, child:

24 THE FLITCH OF BACON.

child: besides, it would not be so prudent for us to be seen together.

Eliza. Your brother is he, Sir?—Why sure then it's very good of him to encourage matrimony in this manner!

Maj. Yes, a very good kind of fellow truly, who shut his door in his own daughter's face, only for doing the very thing that he is now going to reward in others.

Eliza. That was unkind of him, indeed!

Maj. Unkind! why he's the most flint-hearted, close-fisted old dog in the whole hundred, and quite the reverse of me, tho' I'm his brother that say it!

Eliza. What kind of a young lady was she, Sir?

Maj. Nothing to brag on, love! A chattering, forward kind of minx, who, as soon as she began to feel her legs, could not be held in, by the strongest double rein'd bridle in her father's stable.

Eliza. Pleasant all this! [*Aside.*—Was she pretty, Sir?

Maj. Oh! no, quite the reverse.—You might have sworn she was the daughter of a grazier, for she was large, plump, and red, all over, like an Essex calf.

Eliza. A very flattering description, truly!

[*Aside.*

Maj. I mean, when compared with such a sweet, delicate, tempting morsel as you.—[*Kissing her hand.*] But come, my little angel, we lose time; yield at once to the addresses of a man,

A COMIC OPERA: 25

man, trained in the field of honour, who never fails to make a suitable return.

Eliza. Heigho!—And when you have secured my affections, perhaps you'll serve me as your brother did his daughter, turn me out to the wide world, to repent my folly, and rashness.

A I R. *ELIZA.*

The heart the gallant soldier storms,
Surrenders at discretion;
To his command, ev'n love conforms,
And gains him quick possession.
This silent grove
Abets your love,
While you my heart trapan;—
Cease to woo me!
You'll undo me,
Too bewitching man!

Oh! if I yield and grant your will,
I doubt you would forsake me;
And should you not your vows fulfil,
Despair would overtake me!

Da Capo. The heart, &c.

Maj. Forsake you? No, upon my soul, I won't; for if I find you loving and constant, you shall live with me all the days of my life, and inherit the portion I designed for my runaway niece.

Eliza. But see, the country people are passing by the Grove, and we shall be discovered!

Maj.

Maj. Here, here!—take this key then, which unlocks the little white wicket, that leads from the Green into my garden; so that when that old fool my brother, and his mob, are busy with their damn'd *Flitch of Bacon*, you may steal, like a young leveret thro' her meuse, into my shrubbery; will you now my little rose-bud?

Eliza. I will, I will;—but don't squeeze me so.—[*Breaks from him.*] Oh! he's a terrible old man! I'm well out of his clutches.

[*Exit laughing.*]

Maj. Tol-de-roll—[*Strutting.*]—The field's my own!—As to the serjeant, if he pretends to grumble, I can either purchase or compel the dog's silence, which ever I please. My brother Benbow, I suppose, when he hears of it, will run roaring thro' the hamlet like a parish bull—but what care I? All the heroes of antiquity had their pretty little grigs to toy away a pleasurable hour with; and why not the moderns?—*Achilles* had his little blue-eyed wench, and damme I'll have mine!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE, a Green; with a large wooden Chair under an old Oak. A short pastoral Dance of Shepherds, by Way of Entrée to the Procession.

Enter Tipple, with a white Wand, and a Bottle in his Hand, half drunk.

Tip. Make way, make way there; now, do, my sweet, pretty little damsels, make way for the candidates to come in percession from the church;—

A COMIC OPERA. 27

church;—nay! do, my sweet, pretty, little wenches.—It will be your turns, my little smilers, all in good time.—Fohh! what a melting day it is! and not a breath of air to be had, for love, or money—let's see what this will do.

[Drinks.

Justice entering, takes the chair.

Just. nothing now remains, but for you, Tipple, to chaunt out the clause in the charter, summoning the happy couple to come forth, and receive the reward due to their love and fidelity.

[Gives Tipple the Parchment.

Tip. I'm a little hoarse, and giddy, this hot weather, your worship, but I'll do my best.

A I R. T I P P L E.

Ye good men and wives,
Who have lov'd all your lives,
And whose Wows have at no time been shaken,
Now come and draw near,
With your consciences clear,
And demand a huge *Flitch of our Bacon!*
Chorus. Ye good men, &c.

Since a year and a day
Have in love roll'd away,
And an oath of that love has been taken,
On the sharp-pointed stones,
With your bare marrow-bones,
You have won our fam'd *Priory Bacon.*
Chorus. Since a Year, &c.
The

The Throng dividing, Greville and Eliza advance, and kneeling, present the Certificate of their having taken the Oath required.

Just. Receive this benediction from a parent, who, tho' made miserable himself, by the unhappy marriage of an only daughter, solemnly calls heaven to witness, that he wishes every returning year may heap fresh blessings on you both, for your unexampled affection.

Eliza. [Throwing off her veil.] A father's blessing cannot be recalled; 'tis register'd in heaven!

Tip. [Starting.] By the law, and so it is! [Looking more inquisitively.] Miss Eliza!—or—
or—may I never stick a fork into bacon again!

Just. I cannot bear it—let me go.

Tip. You must bear it, and you can't go;—
so—stay, your worship, and do your duty, or
we must make you!

Just. My lost Eliza! and can'st thou call upon heaven to attest thy nuptial happiness?

Eliza. I have proved it, Sir, by the most solemn of all appeals; nor would it raise your admiration a moment, if you knew the man, for whose love I renounced, for a time, the protection of so indulgent a parent.

Just. Heavens! is it possible!

Grev. As our mutual attachment qualified us in every respect for the matrimonial prize of *Dunmow Priory*, we flattered ourselves, that when our claim was admitted, we might plead
it

it in extenuation of our error, and hope for your forgiveness.

Just. To with-hold my pardon and consent now, would be an offence to heaven.

Tip. Ay; and a curs'd offence too! let me tell you that.

Just. Take then my warmest blessing, my children, as a small return for the unexpected happiness you have given me.—But yonder I see your uncle, the Major, at his garden-gate; run to him, Tipple; tell him the news, and bid him come immediately, and partake of our felicity.

Tip. I will.—Mercy on us! wonders will never cease in our hamlet. *[Exit.*

Just. But how dexterously, you little rogues, you contrived this business; to execute it thus without giving us even the least ground for suspicion!

Grev. The thought originated with our bosom friend there in masquerade, whom, I beg leave to introduce to you, as a man who is an honour to his profession.

Just. A good soldier is an honour to mankind! I shall be proud of his acquaintance, and happy to repay the services he has done us all.

[Taking Wilton by the Hand.

Wil. The joy of seeing my brother soldier and his Eliza happy in your forgiveness, has already repaid me.

Maj. *[Speaking behind.]* I say, you jackanapes, I will not forgive her; hold your tongue!—And my brother Benbow is a weak, shallow-pated old fool, to forgive such a little wanton hussy.—*[Coming forward with Tipple.]*—

Where

Where is this Madam Hot-upon't? Let me only just see if she dare look *me* in the face.—

Eliza. That she dare, Sir; and hope you'll like my face now, as well as you did sometime ago.

Maj. [*Discovering her.*] Why, what the devil's here!—A mine sprung?—All blown up, damme!

Wil. Would your honour be pleas'd to back our beating orders?

Maj. A pretty manœuvre, for an old soldier to tumble into such a damn'd ambuscade as this!—[*Aside.*]—but as for you, dog, you deserve to be drum'd out of the regiment.

Just. What is all this about, brother? Why you seem shy of our lost sheep.

Eliza. Oh! dear Sir! my uncle has only chose to be facetious with you all this time, for we have had a long *tête-à-tête* together this morning, before I had the pleasure of seeing you; and he was so delighted with my return, that I thought he would have devoured me alive.

Tip. He has the devil of a stomach sure enough.

[*Major makes Signs to her to prevent a Discovery.*]

Eliza. You were present, Captain Wilson!

Wil. Oh! I never saw any one half so fond and affectionate in the whole course of my life.—You had better strike your colours, old governor, if you mean to retain the honours of war.

[*To the Major.*]

Maj. Quarter, quarter!—I surrender at discretion.

[*Aside to him.*]

Just.

A COMIC OPERA.

31

Just. Give me your hand, brother ; and you really rejoice with me at this event ?

Maj. Oh, prodigiously !—Its a very happy day's work for us all ! *[Ironically.]*

Just. Come, then, you Major shall be gentleman usher, and conduct the bride to the hall.

Maj. By all means—*[Taking her Hand.]* Oh, you little water-wagtail. *[To Eliza.]*

Tip. I have not head enough at this time to understand all this : but as it means happiness and feli—li—city,—why I—I—rejoice in my ignorance.

Just. Right, Tipple.—Come, my friends and neighbours, you must likewise attend us to the Priory, where with mirth and festivity you shall celebrate with me the unexpected felicity of this day.

FINALE. GREVILLE.

Ladies, would you taste *Love's Bacon*,

But one way you'll ever find ;

Let the solemn vow you've taken

With the body—tie the mind !

Mark but this, and we'll ensure ye

To be ever blest, and wise ;

'Tis the charm that will secure ye

DUNMOW's matrimonial prize.

CHORUS. *Mark but, &c.*

ELIZA.

E L I Z A.

And ye men, when you are yoking,
Scorn to trap our sex by art ;
Nought to woman's so provoking,
As a hand—without a heart !

C H O R U S.

*Mark but this, and we'll ensure ye
To be ever blest, and wise ;—
'Tis the charm that will secure ye
DUNMOW's matrimonial prize !*

THE END.

